2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

young people connected with it, it had little reforming influence upon the older people. The government was trying to control the sale of liquor by limiting hours of sale and by excluding minors from taverns. For example, the taverns were closed during the time of Sunday morning service.

Here, then, we have three efforts on the part of villagers and authorities to promote abstinence or temperance. The first, in 1922, used the local governmental machinery but lacked the support of the men who were the only ones with the right to vote. The second was the voluntary association of strong-willed youths, who soon found that formal organizations had short lives in Dragalevtsy. The other method consisted of the mayor's arbitrary edicts, which he had power to make people obey. From time to time he overlooked infringements of his rules, being more interested in avoiding excessive drunkenness on the part of well-known sots than in decreasing the tavern keeper's revenues.

The chief objections raised to the use of liquor were economic rather than moral. Although recreation was not commercialized in our sense of the term, the tavern keepers did make an adequate income from catering to patrons with free time on their hands.

The only formally organized recreational group in the village was the *Yunak* organization. It began its career in the village in 1932. The local group was one of hundreds scattered throughout the whole of Bulgaria for the purpose of organizing the youth for sport and physical education. The activity of this organization was intense in the beginning. Since then, however, interest died down to the point that the young men gathered only two or three times a year for exercise in the schoolyard where there were rings and a horizontal bar, and once a year for election of officers. Many of the members felt that it was an honor to belong because it signified to the rest of the villagers that "you want to be healthy." The older people, however, thought that such an organization was unnecessary since, in their opinion, "if the young people did enough work in the fields and around the stables they would not need any organization for exercise." As is the case with many clubs of this sort, there were four or five people who really carried the load in an effort to keep the group alive. Because this organization was so utterly out of line with the familistic point

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

529 of view, its members got little encouragement from the older people
●575 and had little lasting enthusiasm for its program.

575 The Reading Room Association *(Chitalishte)* was organized
829 locally on February 10, 1921, upon the initiative of men who had been outside the village and had returned with the desire to raise the cultural level. From its founding, however, it concerned itself more with financial than with cultural problems. In the words of the constitution, the purposes of the organization were:

A. to influence the people of the village, especially the young to self-improvement.

B. to cause to grow among the people a feeling for public unity in life and for intelligent usage of the village domain.

C. to cultivate love towards the fatherland and towards the good and morally edifying elements of the national literature.

The *Chitalishte* planned to achieve its purpose by opening a public reading room free for all inhabitants and visitors and supplying the room with suitable books. The *Chitalishte* group also planned to organize evening lectures and other public performances and entertainments "in order to create a patriotic feeling and appreciation of the nation's past."

The first act of the newly organized society was to buy a large sign inscribed with the name of the organization. After that the officers spent money for chairs, lamps, benches, bookcases, stovepipes, and tables, while individuals donated inkstands, water jugs, a box for gathering money, and a picture of the Madonna. Unfortunately this left practically no money for any form of reading matter. The expense of having a share in the construction of the *Obshtina* building further drained the financial resources of the organization. It was also a factor in keeping away prospective members who preferred to wait until the building was paid for before they joined. In 1937 twenty-two people, most of them charter members, were looked upon as active supporters of the work of the *Chitalishte.*

Most of the members were critical of the present officers, and recognized that the organization's activities were at a standstill. When members were asked to tell how they would improve matters if elected

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

to a position of importance they answered: "We should choose a new executive committee, put the library in order, lend out the books, have more evening entertainments. To do this we should get in touch with people in Sofia." 575 829

Part of the trouble arose from disagreement among the officers. In the words of one member, "An organization cannot get ahead with that sort of business." But even more of the trouble went back to the fact that the organizers had not convinced the villagers of the importance of the group. Meanwhile, most peasants looked upon it as an importation of interest only to the intelligentsia and their hangers-on.

The experiences of the *Chitalishte* and other organizations in Dragalevtsy revealed that the peasants were not organization-minded. Even if we included the governmental groups to be discussed in the next chapter, we would find that less than ten women in the village belonged to any formal group, and only 107 of the 510 men over twenty years of age had an organizational membership. Where people's homes were so conveniently located one would expect greater participation on the part of the men, at least. But almost four-fifths of them avoided any organizational affiliation, largely because they were not accustomed to using an organization to do what they thought needed to be done. One of the most frequent reasons for failure to join was this: "Why should I pay the fees charged when I would get nothing in return?" 575

In this world of competing *isms* Dragalevtsy represented in 1937 a modification of familism, the oldest and most widespread way of life we know, perpetuated by agricultural villages all over the world. But familism was slowly losing out. In some quarters of the world the commercialism of a capitalistic system was supplanting the older values with money values; in other quarters the collectivism of a communist society was shaking the economic foundations of the large family group. 178 596

As far as Dragalevtsy was concerned, commercialism was in its infancy. Back in 1937 communism might have seemed to the outsider to have a hold on this village as well as on others in Bulgaria

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

A friend and I had been cycling on the road which followed the Iskar River and stopped at a Panchevo inn. The waiter brought us white peasant cheese, wrinkled brined olives, and freshly made bread to which warm ashes clung. Cold beer made a perfect drink.

The village priest, who had become such an integral part of village life and managed to keep harmonious relationships between the church and the state functionaries, was no longer in Dragalevtsy. Three years ago he had become involved in an administrative argument with his superior and was told to transfer to a much less desirable parish. Rather than make this shift he went to live in Sofia where, true to his training in finance and commerce, he had a share in a small business enterprise. He still wore his priestly garb, occasionally officiating in a Sofia church. Someone described him as "a minister without portfolio."

The directress of the school was the only member of the intelligentsia who had stuck to her post through thick and thin. She still took the same interest in the all-around development of the children, emphasizing in particular their hygienic training and their religious tuition. There had been considerable shifting in the membership of her teaching staff, but she still had five teachers who, like their predecessors, were more interested in Sofia week ends than village welfare.

The Sekretar Birnik, who had much to do with the collection of taxes and thus enjoyed a social standing out of line with his educational preparation, had also left Dragalevtsy and had been replaced by a local person.

It seemed strange to visit the now completed municipal building and to find the woman doctor no longer there and to notice the absence of her husband from the taverns where he had enjoyed playing cards. Since both were White Russians they knew that their lot under the Communists would be full of uncertainty. No one seemed to know just where they had gone.

Much had been happening to the village organizations as the intelligentsia faded from the scene or were replaced by others with different points of view. The Red Cross, in which the mayor had

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

575 taken such an interest, had long ceased to have any importance. This
178 was also true of the Union for Protection of Children, which had had as its chief function the provision of school lunches for the poor children. The Association for the Decoration for Valor was still tottering along, and its members hoped eventually to enroll three or four members who had participated in the recent war. The School Board had become a thing of the past as the control of the school passed into the hands of the Sofia School System. The Church Board, however, was maintaining its existence and was giving its support to a new organization called the Christian Union which had been founded during the Fascist regime as a religious welfare organization. Before the coming of the Russians this Christian Union had collected and distributed to the poor families at Christmas time and the New Year an amount varying from sixty to seventy thousand leva. In 1945 it boasted about seventy-five members and was flourishing.

For the most part, however, the village organizations died at birth or perished in early infancy, as an earlier chapter showed. The
[596] Dragalevtsy peasant had not yet become a joiner.[1] He gained his social status by the position his family held rather than by the numbers and types of organizations to which he, as an individual, was elected

183 Such, then, was the prelude to Communism. The coming of the
178 National State to the village back in 1934 set a pattern by which each peasant household was later on closely geared in with a totalitarian wartime economy. The majority of traditions were holding firm among the middle-aged and old, while many of the younger people no longer disguised their interest in the fascinating ways of the West. The net effect of the war was to commercialize more fully the village's economic life and make the peasants more money-conscious. Their incorporation into the Sofia municipality as well as the Fascist nature of their state made them feel less responsible as individuals for governmental affairs and drew them farther away from the democratic Slavic tradition inherent in their old joint family system. Religion continued to be accepted as a matter of course, for no one questioned the propriety of having a priest officiate on ceremonial or patriotic occasions.

1 [As of 1945--Analyst]

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

622 668 to qualify for governmental retirement benefits and his former supporters were now a part of the opposition. Sofia, too, had a new mayor. It seemed to the village dignitary that all of his trouble was becoming a labor of love for which he would receive little financial return. Upon last report he was seeking a way out of office and was subject to a great deal of jesting in the taverns. The men all laughed one day in December, 1945, when a visitor from Sofia addressed him as "Mr. Mayor," because nobody knew at that time whether he was the mayor or not.

An office more important, however, than that of the mayor was that of the Commune Secretary. In Dragalevtsy this man was a Communist and, although he did not take the public limelight as much as a regular mayor would, he was the key person in the local government. Communist party matters frequently cleared through him, and he was in position to inform higher authorities about all phases of village government. Whereas the mayor's allegiance was primarily to the people of Dragalevtsy and secondarily to the Agrarian party, a luncheon conversation with the Secretary showed me that his loyalty was first of all to his party. Through serving it he felt he was best serving the people.

668 575 883 178 Part of the secret of Communist control in the local community lay in the success which the Communists had in enlisting the aid of many of the young people. In a traditionalistic society, such as one finds in Dragalevtsy, young people have no place of importance. Prestige is reserved for the old; and wisdom is the prerogative of the aged. Therefore a young person is constantly being urged to conform; and whatever idealism may flare up within him in his late teens becomes dissipated in the face of his placid parents and the other apostles of the past. The Communists showed real insight, therefore, in their glorification of the young people, in giving them a place in the sun, as it were. One of the first things they did was to get control of the *Chitalishte,* or Reading-Room Association, and use that as the core for their young people's program. In the house just back of the *Obshtina* they set up clubrooms where members of the *RMS* (Workers Youth Union) could hold meetings, study up on party doctrines, or loaf. The members of this particular organization, although not

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

representing the majority of the young people, had an increasing voice in village affairs and were aggressive in their approach to practical problems. Part of this aggressiveness was directed against the young people at that time still active in the *ZMS* (Agrarian Youth Society), which was a part of the opposition.

Another means by which the Communists gained support was in the favoritism shown to party members in the distribution of rationed articles. Just as the ward boss of an American city or the prewar mayor of Dragalevtsy learned that gratitude prompts support or that favors done call for favors in return, so the Fatherland Front made good use of its opportunities. Some of its generosity served purely political ends. The mayor of Sofia, so the Dragalevtsy peasants said, gave one million leva at Christmas time to the *Septemvriche,* or National Children's Communist Organization. Opposition groups, of course, received no such largesse.

But many of the criticisms of pork-barrel politics were due to misunderstanding. The peasants of Dragalevtsy could usually procure no clothing coupons if they had wool at home, and most of them did have a small supply which they were allowed to keep. This amount was based on family size and any surplus was requisitioned by the government. Artisans and laborers, however, who had no sheep, who worked in factories or at their trade, received the clothing coupons, for that was the only way they had of obtaining wearing apparel. Wool and cotton, thread, and goods were still so scarce in both villages and cities that no one group was content with what it had, and peasants were inclined to ascribe whatever others received as due to favoritism rather than the merits of the case. The proof that wool was scarce was the relative inactivity of the carding and spinning *sedenki,* the working bees so popular among the women.

"Why don't you have *sedenki* now," I asked.

"We have no wool to work," was the plausible answer.

Communist party members who used their political standing for self-aggrandizement and enrichment were supposed to be severely dealt with by the party authorities. One story making the rounds in Dragalevtsy had done much to discredit the Communists with those in the opposition. Since living in a Balkan village is a great deal like

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

The mayor has some influence with the Debt Commissions coming from government banks to relieve the debt burdens of the farmers, he distributes whatever relief is available for needy families, and he has a prominent part in the administration of the school, public health, and village improvements. Because of this he is gradually displacing the priest as the most important personality in the village. In other words, the paternalism of the church is now being supplanted by that of the state.

We find a similar situation in the South where white farmers are beginning to depend less upon landlords, banks, and advancing merchants, and more upon the grants from governmental units, whether in the form of relief or credit facilities. Plantation or small-town paternalism is yielding to governmental paternalism.

The Bulgarian peasant is not a joiner. He does not use the organizational approach in attacking a problem but prefers to work through informal groups. There are two chief reasons why he avoids membership in the numerous formal groups seeking the villagers' support: first, he is penurious and will pay no membership fee unless he sees some prospect of personal advantage; secondly, he does not understand the purpose or program of the organizations, since most of them originate in the cities and are promoted by the *intelligentsia*. There are no church organizations claiming his support as in the case in most Southern neighborhoods. Living in a village as he does the peasant can visit with friends and neighbors without the necessity of having an organization to provide a rallying place.

The Southern white thinks vertically; the Bulgarian peasant horizontally —a difference in mental pattern which accounts for the difference in social process.

By "thinking vertically" I mean that traditionally the Southern white is dominated by the attraction of the American ladder of opportunity, although for him it has often proved mythical.[20] That is, success in life is determined by the extent to which one approximates the plane of living enjoyed by those of a higher economic level. Climbing means competition rather than co-operation.[21] Frustration seems to be displacing the traditional, optimistic view among many of the Southern whites. They look up the ladder, but say, "What's the use of starting the climb!" As individuals they are pitted against forces over which they have no control.[22]

[20] H. C. Nixon, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Shows the traditional nature of this mind-set in speaking of the Old South: "Nonslaveowners expected to become small slaveowners, and small slaveowners expected to become large ones." The mythical aspect is shown nowadays by the phrase "once a sharecropper, always a sharecropper."

[21] Odum, *op. cit.*, pp. 585-586, emphasizes the need for county and/or community co-operation.

[22] Perhaps Populism in the late 19th century came as near creating a consciousness of kind among the rural whites as anything else has ever done.

797 communities, and they worked only for the good of the communities.

797 575 The organizations of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. were started independently of the Protestant or mission people. But those starting both organizations were people who had been closely connected the the Protestant work in Bulgaria. The purpose of organizing these was to make them serve all Bulgarians, especially the Orthodox Christians as well. The Y.M.C.A. was started by the husband of a graduate of the Lovetch School, who was not a Protestant himself, and a friend of his, a banker who was a Methodist. They were able to have an American secretary sent out, and the Y.M.C.A. did an excellent work for the Bulgarian youths. It held evening classes and had fine summer camps in the mountains and on the Black Sea.

The Y.W.C.A. was started by a graduate who was the daughter of a graduate from the Women's College at Constantinople, a Bulgarian. She was ably assisted by several young women who were graduates also of the Constantinople School. The Y.W.C.A. was a vigorous and successful undertaking, reaching many young women and girls in Bulgaria. It conducted many classes and had a summer camp for industrial girls at Zemen all through the summer. It also carried on a good work for the factory girls around Sofia.

Both the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. have been closed since the arrival of the Nazis in 1942. The Communists also do not allow them to continue their work.